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GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Fifty-first session
Agenda items 33, 35 and 85
THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST
QUESTION OF PALESTINE
REPORT OF THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE TO INVESTIGATE ISRAELI PRACTICES AFFECTING THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE AND OTHER ARABS OF THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-second year

Identical letters dated 25 February 1997 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General and to the President of the Security Council

As Chairman of the Group of Arab States for the month of February 1997, I have the honour to transmit to you, annexed hereto, the text of a communiqué issued on 23 February 1997 by the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States in which it reiterates that the persistence of Israel in establishing settlements in the occupied Arab territories will have serious consequences for the peace process.

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 33, 35 and 85, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Nasser AL-KIDWA
Chairman of the Group of Arab States
Permanent Observer for Palestine
to the United Nations

ANNEX

Communiqué issued on 23 February 1997 by the General Secretariat of the League of Arab States

The General Secretariat of the League of Arab States takes note with grave anxiety of the decision of the Israeli authorities to establish in the southern part of East Jerusalem, and specifically in the Jabal Abu Ganim area, a new settlement consisting of 600 housing units, with the aim of tightening the stranglehold on Al-Quds. Likewise, despite the adoption of Security Council resolution 1073 (1996) on this subject, the Israeli authorities have kept open the tunnel situated within the Haram al-Sharif (the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock). Moreover, Israel continues to isolate East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank, declaring it off-limits to Palestinians and withdrawing residence permits for the city's original Arab inhabitants, which constitutes a deliberate "transfer" operation designed to encourage Jewish settlement in the city and to impose a fait accompli prior to the opening of the final-status negotiations in March.

The General Secretariat of the League of Arab States stresses that the actions taken by the Israeli authorities to increase the flow of settlers into Al-Quds and the occupied Syrian Arab Golan constitute a flagrant violation of the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and the provisions of the Hague Convention of 1907 and a serious infringement of the resolutions adopted by the United Nations, particularly the Security Council, on the Israeli-Arab conflict and the question of Palestine. The General Secretariat refers in this context to the resolution adopted by the Council of the League of Arab States at its special session held on 6 May 1995, in which the Council reaffirmed that under no circumstances would it recognize the actions taken by Israel, the occupying Power, designed to change the legal status, geographical nature and demographic composition of Al-Quds, and called upon countries throughout the world to refuse to recognize such changes, while deciding to keep the matter under review. The General Secretariat stresses that the persistence of Israel in establishing settlements in the occupied Arab territories will have awkward consequences for the peace process. Accordingly, the Security Council and the co-sponsors of the peace process, particularly the United States of America, are urged to take prompt action to compel Israel to desist from these settlement activities in the occupied Arab territories in general, and in Al-Quds in particular, in view of that city's crucial importance to the Arab world and the Islamic world and to the international community and the three revealed religions.